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The Honorable Richard M. Nixon
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

My dear Mr. President:

It was indeed a privilege to have the opportunity of meeting you and personally relating to you some of my observations on the enthusiastic reaction of the Russian people to your recent meeting with Mr. Brezhnev. I should like to express again my sincere and grateful appreciation for the warm and gracious hospitality you accorded me.

As I have indicated to you in my previous letters, as well as during our recent conversation, I have applauded and admired your vision, courage, and zeal in pursuit of improved international relations. Your contributions toward world harmony and "a generation of peace" are of historic import. Our meeting reinforced my previous conviction of your wholehearted dedication to the fulfillment of this goal.

In accordance with our discussion and your kind reception of my suggestions to enhance your efforts in this direction, I should like to outline certain proposals for your consideration. These are based upon my observations and experience visiting every major country and most smaller countries throughout the world during the past quarter century or so, as well as my experience in training, in my own cardiovascular center, more than 250 foreign specialists in this medical discipline.

American medical science enjoys a position of pre-eminence as a result of the unprecedented progress made during the past two decades with the support

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of both the public and private sectors (a unique American trait which I know you strongly favor). As a result, the rest of the world looks to us for guidance and assistance in their efforts to advance their own standards of medical service to their people. In this connection, I know you will agree that our leadership in this field must not only be maintained but indeed intensified.

Because the field of medicine has been generally recognized and accepted as an ennobling and genuinely humanitarian field of endeavor, it constitutes one of the strongest bridges across international borders. America's superiority and strength in medicine provide an extremely effective mechanism to bolster your efforts to foster international alliance. You have, of course, already taken cognizance of this fact in the creation of a medical collaborative program with the USSR. As I indicated to you, however, the practical implementation of such a partnership is as important as the agreement itself. In the field of heart disease, for example, I have the distinct impression from the conference I had recently with (and at the request of) Boris Petrovsky, the Minister of Health of the USSR, that the collaborative program which you initiated is not being adequately pursued. I hasten to state that the Minister was not critical of U.S. efforts, but indicated that their own bureaucratic inertia was as much a part of the problem as anything else. Obviously, this is a politically delicate matter, which I felt it would be undesirable to pursue.

Whatever the reasons may be, his impatience with the formal program was evident from his request to engage in a cooperative venture directly with me in three spheres of activity:

- (1) The preparation of a joint manual on the more urgent aspects of heart disease, bringing together current knowledge on the subject, as an American-Russian project.

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- (2) The exchange of young trainees and scientists in the field of heart disease to spend several months to a year in our respective centers. (Dr. Petrovsky is sending one of his best young surgeons to join me next month.)
- (3) The establishment of a collaborative program in the field of cardiovascular artificial devices and instrumentation. The Minister of Health emphasized that he especially needs our help in this project because of our greatly advanced technology.

I am, of course, pleased to work with him directly in these special undertakings but, as I indicated to you, we can be far more effective with the great resources that are available to your Office. It is for this reason that I suggested that the prestige of your Office be used to monitor this activity and to mobilize these resources with the assistance of your immediate aides, Drs. Tkach and Lukash, and of such highly competent physicians as Drs. Charles Edwards and Theodore Cooper. I should, of course, be delighted to assist your Office and those you may assign to implement this activity in any way I can.

I should also like to propose, as I indicated during our conversation, as well as in my letter to you of March 14, 1973, that some initiative be undertaken to establish a comparable program with the Peoples Republic of China. Heart disease has become an increasingly important problem for them, and their need for our help in this regard is even greater than that of the Russians, for they lag far behind us in this health matter. I believe they would welcome an opportunity to develop a collaborative program with us.

For your convenience, I am enclosing several copies of this letter, in the event you wish to send them to those you indicated are involved in these activities: The Honorable Melvin Laird, Drs. Walter R. Tkach, William Lukash, Charles Edwards, and Ted Cooper, and Mr. James Cavanaugh. Please be assured

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of my wholehearted cooperation in your international medical programs; I shall be happy to assist in any way I can. I fervently hope that you will receive the support you deserve and need in order to achieve these noble objectives.

May I thank you again for the beautiful cufflinks and pin, which I shall treasure as mementos of the stimulating and rewarding meeting I was privileged to have with you last week. I shall look forward to receiving an autographed photograph. May God be with you and keep you in health, happiness, and good works.

Sincerely yours,

Michael E. DeBakey, M.D.

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